THE CREATURE WITH NO CLAWS.

By Joel Chandler Harris.

"W'EN you git a leetle bit older dan w'at you is, honey," said Uncle Remus to the little boy, "you 'll know lots mo' dan you does now."

The old man had a pile of white oak splits by his side and these he was weaving into a chair-bottom. He was an expert in the art of "bottoming chairs," and he earned many a silver quarter in this way. The little boy seemed to be much interested in the process.

"BRER WOLF MAKE LIKE HE GWINE TER HIT DE CREETUR, EN DEN ——" (SEE NEXT PAGE.)

"Hit 's des like I tell you," the old man went on; "I done had de speunce un it. I done got so now dat I don't b'lieve w'at I see, much less w'at I year. It got ter be whar I kin put my han' on it en fumble wid it. Folks kin fool deyse'f lots wuss dan yuther folks kin fool um, en ef you don't b'lieve w'at I 'm a-tellin' un you, you kin des ax Brer Wolf de nex' time you meet 'im in de big road."

"What about Brother Wolf, Uncle Remus?" the little boy asked, as the old man paused to refill his pipe.

"Well, honey, 't ain't no great long rigamarole; hit 's des one er deze yer tales w'at goes in a gallop twel it gits ter de jumpin'-off place.

"One time Brer Wolf wuz gwine 'long de big road feelin' mighty proud en high-strung. He wuz a mighty high-up man in dem days, Brer Wolf wuz, en 'mos' all de yuther creeturs wuz feard un 'im. Well, he wuz gwine 'long lickin' his chops en walkin' sorter stiff-kneed, w'en he happen ter look down 'pon de groun' en dar he seed a track in de san'. Brer Wolf stop, he did, en look at it, en den he 'low:

"'Heyo! w'at kind er creetur dish yer? Brer Dog ain't make dat track, en needer is Brer Fox. Hit 's one er deze yer kind er creeturs w'at ain't got no claws. I 'll des 'bout foller 'im up, en ef I ketch 'im he 'll sholy be my meat.'

"Dat de way Brer Wolf talk. He followed 'long atter de track, he did, en he look at it close, but he ain't see no print er no claw. Bimeby de track tuck 'n tu'n out de road en go up a dreen whar de rain done wash out. De track wuz plain dar in de wet san', but Brer Wolf ain't see no sign er no claws.

"He foller en foller, Brer Wolf did, en de track git fresher en fresher, but still he ain't see no print er no claw. Bimeby he come in sight er de creetur, en Brer Wolf stop, he did, en look at 'im. He stop stock-still and look. De creetur wuz mighty quare-lookin', en he wuz cuttin' up some mighty quare capers. He had big head, sharp nose, en bob tail; en he wuz walkin' roun' en roun' a big dog-wood tree, rubbin' his sides ag'in it. Brer Wolf watch 'im a right smart while, he act so quare, en den he 'low:

"WELL, SUH, DAT CREETUR DES FOTCH ONE SWIPE DIS AWAY, EN 'N'ER SWIPE DAT AWAY." (SEE NEXT PAGE.)

"'Shoo! dat creetur done bin in a fight en los' de bes' part er he tail; en w'at make he scratch hisse'f dat away? I lay I 'll let 'im know who he foolin' 'long wid.'

"Atter 'while, Brer Wolf went up a leetle nigher de creetur, en holler out:

"'Heyo, dar! w'at you doin' scratchin' yo' scaly hide on my tree, en tryin' fer ter break hit down?'

"De creetur ain't make no answer. He des walk 'roun' en 'roun' de tree scratchin' he sides en back. Brer Wolf holler out:

"'I lay I 'll make you year me ef I hatter come dar whar you is!'

"De creetur des walk 'roun' en 'roun' de tree, en ain't make no answer. Den Brer Wolf hail 'im ag'in, en talk like he mighty mad:

"'Ain't you gwine ter min' me, you imperdent scoundul? Ain't you gwine ter mozey outer my woods en let my tree 'lone?'

"Wid dat, Brer Wolf march todes de creetur des like he gwine ter squ'sh 'im in de groun'. De creetur rub hisse'f ag'in de tree en look like he feel mighty good. Brer Wolf keep on gwine todes 'im, en bimeby w'en he git sorter close de creetur tuck 'n sot up on his behime legs des like you see squir'ls do. Den Brer Wolf, he 'low, he did:

"'Ah-yi! you beggin', is you? But 't ain't gwine ter do you no good. I mout er let you off ef you 'd a-minded me w'en I fus' holler atter you, but I ain't gwine ter let you off now. I 'm a-gwine ter l'arn you a lesson dat 'll stick by you.'

"Den de creetur sorter wrinkle up he face en mouf, en Brer Wolf 'low:

"'Oh, you nee'n'ter swell up en cry, you 'ceitful vilyun. I 'm a-gwine ter gi' you a frailin' dat I boun' you won't forgit.'

"Brer Wolf make like he gwine ter hit de creetur, en den ——"

Here Uncle Remus paused and looked all around the room and up at the rafters. When he began again his voice was very solemn.

— "Well, sûh, dat creetur des fotch one swipe dis away, en 'n'er swipe dat away, en mos' 'fo' you can wink yo' eye-balls, Brer Wolf hide wuz mighty nigh teetotally tor'd off 'n 'im. Atter dat de creetur sa'ntered off in de woods, en 'gun ter rub hisse'f on 'n'er tree."

"What kind of a creature was it, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy.

"Well, honey," replied the old man in a confidential whisper, "hit want nobody on de top-side er de yeth but ole Brer Wildcat."